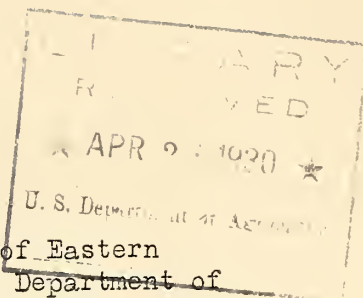


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SAFEGUARDING YOUR FOODS AND DRUGS -- No. 3.

Tuesday, March 13, 1930.



A series of radio talks by W. R. M. Wharton, Chief of Eastern District, Food, Drug, and Insecticide Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, delivered Tuesday mornings at 10 a.m., Eastern Standard Time., through WJZ, New York, and the following other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company: KWK, St. Louis, WREN, Kansas City; KFAB, Lincoln, Nebr.; WRC, Washington; WBZA, Boston; KSTP, St. Paul; WSM, Nashville; WAPI, Birmingham; WJAX, Jacksonville; WPTF, Raleigh; WRVA, Richmond.

My friends, I come to you as a representative of the United States Government and, as I have already told you, I have been in the game of enforcing the Federal Food and Drugs Act for more than twenty years. The Food and Drugs Act insures the purity and wholesomeness, and honesty of labeling, of the foods you folks use; and the purity and proper branding of your drug supplies.

In this series of weekly radio talks, I am relating some of my personal experiences, and telling some of the human-interest stories which these experiences have brought to life, in order that you may know how your food and drug supply receives constant protection under the Federal Food and Drugs Act.

Last week I departed from my personal experiences to tell you how to read food and drug labels. On the previous week I described how table salt sold at more than fifteen thousand dollars per pound, and how a Food & Drug Inspector outwitted a very, very wise black pepper adulterator.

My talk today will cover my experiences in the enforcement of the Federal Food and Drugs Act, involving the outlawing of the polishing of coffee with poisonous colors, and I shall tell a story about an attack on Quackery.

A number of years ago I had an assignment under the Federal Food and Drugs Act, to investigate the practices of the dealers in green coffee, to determine whether there were in vogue in this industry any practices transgressing the terms of the Pure Food Law.

I discovered, in the course of this investigation, in the plant of a large and supposedly reputable concern, a strange piece of equipment, consisting of a large, elongated, cylindrical, wooden drum, which was set on bearings and rotated by a motor, but which at the time of its first observation was not in operation. The management of the Company who owned the plant, appeared reticent about the use to which this drum was put; indeed they were more than reticent, for they declared that this piece of equipment was obsolete and out of use. They solemnly assured the Government Agent that this drum had not been used for years. The Government Agent did not fall for this stuff. He had other ideas. His hunch appeared correct when weeks later, using subterfuge, he was able to observe this piece of equipment in actual operation, - when he found it

(over)

filled with green coffee which was being rotated in the presence of a yellowish powdery substance.

I managed, unseen, to obtain a small amount of the coffee from the drum, and to secure a small pinch of the yellowish, powdery substance. Chemical tests showed that the powdery substance was a mixture of Lead Chromate and Talc. **** Lead Chromate - A Poison - An Accumulative Poison. Then the picture was clear: Green Coffee, of poor appearance and obviously inferior in quality, was being coated by the rotation process, with Lead Chromate and Talc, to improve its appearance and to increase its market value. By this operation, at slight cost, this manufacturer was being enabled to sell an inferior article at the price of a superior one; and of course the finished product (which might have gone to your table and my table), was rendered deleterious to health by reason of the coating of lead chromate which it had received.

Now, the output of this factory was moving in interstate commerce, and so was subject to the provisions of the Federal Food and Drugs Act, which specifically prohibits the coating of any food product to conceal any inferiority; and which specifically prohibits the addition of any poisonous substance to any food product. A carload of this poisonous coffee had just been shipped. How did the Inspector know? That's his business to find out.

No time to be lost. This coffee must not go to the consumer, - not a pound of it. A train must be caught. I find the coffee. It is tested. The presence of lead chromate - (a poison) is confirmed. The Federal Food and Drugs Act is invoked. The carload of lead chromated coffee is seized. A Federal judge has been apprized of the facts; he orders the seizure. The U. S. marshal makes the attachment - he impounds the offending coffee. The case comes up for settlement. Did the Coffee Co. appear in court to claim and defend its product? It did not. This concern preferred to write off the several thousand dollars of value, as loss. The Court considered the facts, applied the Food and Drugs Act to these facts, and handed down a decree condemning this poisonous coffee and ordering its forfeiture, condemnation and destruction. A coffee bonfire followed, and the entire lot was reduced to ashes. Moreover, the perpetrators of this inexcusable act were successfully prosecuted in the Federal Courts. This and other similar actions, my friends, brought under the Federal Food and Drugs Act, have effectively stopped the coating, polishing and coloring of coffee with poisonous substances. You may be sure that this is true - Poisons are no longer added to coffee - Your Food and Drugs Act does not permit it.

I suppose there has never been a health resort that did not have its quota of charlatans and crooks, preying upon the sick minds of those with sick bodies, to loosen their purse strings.

A particular resort which I have in mind, was no exception to the rule, and many fraudulent preparations were manufactured and distributed from this point. During the course of the investigation of patent medicine

vendors here, your speaker made a visit to a so-called combination doctor agency and patent medicine factory. The door was labeled, "Diseases Diagnosed by Observation of the Eye".

In due course your speaker was ushered into the so-called doctor's private office, and here was confronted with a dapper young man in a loud check suit, who courteously indicated a chair for the supposed patient, and produced from a medicine cabinet a bottle containing a gold-colored liquid. The alleged doctor poured a few ounces of the liquid in a glass and approached the supposed patient saying, "you are sick, drink that." This procedure was intended apparently to commit the supposed patient to a course of treatment without further ado and without any negotiations or demurs. The theory being, I suppose, that the exercise of the will of the alleged doctor on the supposed patient, would place the alleged patient in a position where whatever fee the doctor might charge, could be collected.

The alleged patient took the glass of liquid in his hands, and waited. The supposed doctor cried out in a loud, semi-hysterical, commanding voice, - "Drink the Liquid Gold. You are sick. Drink, and be Well!" The patient, of course, refused to drink; but, instead, took a small vial from his pocket and poured the material offered, into the vial, which he then placed in his pocket for subsequent chemical analysis.

The doctor then sensed the situation and said, "Are you a government agent?" And just then, just as these words were being uttered, a side door opened and a very nice-looking little woman rushed into the room, and inquired: "Oh George! Are you in trouble again?", and threw her arms around his neck. This scene - the heartache of the young wife, who believed her husband would be taken away under arrest- her tears, her fear, her concern over the future, her utter dejection,- was a lot of mush staged to create sympathy. To make this story short: The golden colored liquid was nothing but colored water. It was not necessary to make an arrent. This place of business was vacated the next day, and the business of preparing, prescribing, and shipping Golden Colored Water, for the cure of "The Sick" was discontinued, and the alleged doctor left town and has never been heard of since****.

Now I want to say a few words to the label readers. Last week I told you, "How to Read Food and Drug Labels". I told why you should learn to read food and drug labels, - I emphasized the advantage to you, the saving that you could effect by reading labels intelligently and critically. I offered to send you a copy of my talk on "How to Read Food and Drug Labels". I urged you to form read label clubs and to send in for explanation any labels which you do not understand. This invitation still stands. I shall add each week to the read label advice. I shall add additional read label information.

Do you know what the term "Extra Sifted" means on a can of peas? Do you know the difference between "Early Peas" and "Sweet Peas"? Let me answer both questions. Early Peas or Early June Peas are peas of early-maturing varieties having a smooth skin. Sweet Peas or Sugar Peas

are later-maturing varieties, having a wrinkled skin and a sweet taste. When put up in cans, Early Peas are separated into various sizes by the sieve method of sizing. The smallest size, or Number 1 peas, are called "Small Peas", or Petit Pois. The next, or Number 2 size, are called "Early June Extra Sifted". The next size, or Number 3, are called "Early June Sifted"; and the large peas, that is, Number 4 or larger, are called only "Early June".

The practice of canning peas without grading as to size is growing. These unsifted peas are called the Run of the Pod.

Remember, Early June - Smooth Variety - Sizes called:

No. 1, Petit Pois; No. 2, Extra Sifted; No. 3, Sifted; No. 4, or larger, name used only. Sweet or Sugar peas are wrinkled and have sweet taste.

My friends, insist upon getting what you want to buy, and double check by reading labels.

Next Tuesday, at this hour, I shall tell you about Taking rotten eggs out of bakery cakes and of the rise, decline and fall of the egg substitute game, as well as more about how to read labels.
